

01/10/1997

PCT

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INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

<b>(51) International Patent Classification<sup>6</sup> :</b> A23L 2/02, 2/84, 1/212, 1/06		<b>A1</b>	<b>(11) International Publication Number:</b> WO 97/49303 <b>(43) International Publication Date:</b> 31 December 1997 (31.12.97)
<b>(21) International Application Number:</b> PCT/EP97/02947 <b>(22) International Filing Date:</b> 29 May 1997 (29.05.97)		<b>(81) Designated States:</b> AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, CA, CH, CN, CU, CZ, DE, DK, EE, ES, FI, GB, GE, GH, HU, IL, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, TJ, TM, TR, TT, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ARIPO patent (GH, KE, LS, MW, SD, SZ, UG), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).	
<b>(30) Priority Data:</b> 96201710.9 21 June 1996 (21.06.96) EP <b>(34) Countries for which the regional or international application was filed:</b> NL et al.		<b>Published</b> With international search report.	
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**(54) Title:** FERMENTATION OF FRUIT PRODUCTS

**(57) Abstract**

A process for preparing a fruit product comprising the steps of: i) breaking and/or crushing the fruit; ii) adjusting the pH to 4.0 - 7.0, preferably to 5.5 - 6.5; iii) sterilising and/or pasteurising the broken/crushed fruit; iv) adding a culture of a Lactobacillus or Lactococcus strain producing when growing an extracellular polysaccharide at a rate of at least 0.8 g/l at 20 °C, a pH of 5.8 within 24 hours and a medium according to De Man, Rogosa and Sharpe (J. Appl. Bacteriol. 23: 130-135 (1960)) followed by fermenting; and v) pasteurising and/or sterilising the fermented fruit material. Preferably the fruit is from a plant of the family of the Solanaceae, more preferably from Lycopersicum esculentum (=tomato), or any cultivar thereof. Preferably the Lactobacillus/Lactococcus is selected from the group comprising Lactobacillus sake 0-1 (CBS 532.92), Lactobacillus paracasei (LMG 91931) and Lab 97) and Lactococcus lactis cremoris (LAB 338).

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**FERMENTATION OF FRUIT PRODUCTS.**

The invention relates to the fermentation of vegetable  
5 and/or fruit products, more in particular to the fermenta-  
tion of crushed/broken fruits from plants of the family of  
the Solanaceae, in particular tomato, capsicum (paprika  
and/or pepper), Chili pepper and egg plant, preferably from  
Lycopersicum esculentum (=tomato), and any cultivar there-  
10 of.

This invention also includes the fermentation of mixtures  
of crushed/broken fruits as e.g. of tomato and pepper or  
mixtures of tomato and vegetables.

More in particular the invention relates to the preparation  
of tomato paste, tomato pulp, tomato juice or other tomato  
based products. Tomato paste is an important commercial  
product and is used as an ingredient for soups, sauces and  
5 ketchup. The largest part of the world tomato crop is  
processed into tomato paste and the present invention which  
relates inter alia to the preparation of tomato paste is  
therefore commercially important.

10 A typical tomato paste process comprises:  
tomatoes -> washing -> crushing/breaking -> heating -> pul-  
ping/sieving -> juice -> concentration -> paste, but many  
variations are known. Breaking can be effected at tempera-  
tures of about 90°-95°C (hot break) or at low temperatures  
15 of about 40°-60°C (cold break). Cold break favours degra-  
dation of cell wall material by pectolytic enzymes and the  
apparent viscosity, which is an important quality attribu-  
te, is increased. Adjustment of the Ph by addition of  
citric acid and degassing are steps which are often includ-  
20 ed to improve the end quality of the paste. The above  
processing steps cause physical, chemical and enzymatic

changes to occur in the tomato material which influence the rheological, other physical properties and organoleptic properties of the end product.

Enzymatic modification of tomato suspensions has been

5 investigated (thesis F. W. C. den Ouden, Agricultural University Wageningen, The Netherlands 1995). The effects of pectin degrading enzymes caused tomato cells and particles to disintegrate into smaller particles and the values of rheological parameters of the suspension were generally,

10 sometimes after an initial increase, found to decrease and moreover objectionable serum separation on top of fluid products increased which causes less consumer appeal. Serum separation is interrelated with thickness and a higher thickness tendency decreases serum separation. The tendency

15 towards serum separation can conveniently be estimated on a laboratory scale by centrifuging the material.

Lebensm.-Wiss. u. Technol., 22, 65-67 (1989) discloses the preservation of whole ripe small ripe tomatoes (8-10g) by

20 means of covering them with brine and subsequent subjecting them to lactic acid fermentation as to obtain a keepable fermented product that can be consumed in salad.

EP-A-0 308 064 (Kagome Kabushiki Kaisha) discloses to

25 improve the flavour of a beverage based on tomato by lactic acid fermentation using particular lactobacilli strains. Thus tomato beverages are prepared with a "compound but unified flavour" by fermenting a processed tomato product, preferably together with a milk product with Lactobacillus bulgaricus and/or Lactobacillus helveticus. More preferably the fermentation is also carried out in the presence of Streptococcus thermophilus. It stated that only by using at least Lactobacillus bulgaricus and/or Lactobacillus helveticus that generation of so-called "off flavour" can be

30 controlled during the lactic acid fermentation of a proces-

sed tomato product or its mixture and it is stated that beverages with a compound but unified flavour can be obtained efficiently.

5 It is clear from the prior art that lactic acid fermentation of tomato based products has been used in order to obtain keepable products. It is also clear that tomato products with an improved "unified" flavour can be obtained by lactic acid fermentation with very specific lactobacilli. At least some of these lactobacilli as e.g. *L. brevis* are heterofermentative and convert sugar into lactic acid, acetic acid, carbon dioxide and ethanol. Most lactic acid bacteria aim at the production of lactic acid and not at the production of extra cellular polysaccharides. However, 15 fruit products like tomato juice, tomato paste and products derived therefrom, apple juice, etc usually also suffer from other disadvantages such as e.g. serum separation. Generally consumers like a keepable, thick, rich product showing no serum separation and having a good flavour. Food 20 additives like colours, acidifying agents e.g. citric acid and thickening agents e.g. modified starch are, however, not generally appreciated. The present invention aims to provide fruit products with a favourable combination of the above features.

25

In a first embodiment of the invention a process for preparing an improved fruit product such as juice, paste or pulp is provided comprising the steps of:

- i) breaking and/or crushing the fruit,
- 30 ii) adjusting the pH to 4.0 - 7.0, preferably to 5.5 - 6.5,
- iii) sterilising and/or pasteurizing the broken/crushed fruit,
- iv) adding a culture of a *Lactobacillus* or *Lactococcus* 35 strain producing when growing an extracellular

polysaccharide at a rate of at least 0.8 g/l at 20°C, a pH of 5.8 within 24 hours in a medium according to De Man, J.C., M. Rogosa and M.E. Sharpe (J. Appl. Bacteriol. 23:130-135, 1960),

5 followed by fermenting, and

v) pasteurisation and/or sterilisation of the fermented fruit material.

More preferable the rate of producing extracellular polysaccharide (EPS) mentioned above is at least 1.0 g/l, most 10 preferably at least 1.2 g/l.

Breaking and/or crushing the fruit is conveniently carried out after first washing and blanching or scalding the fruit, the tomatoes are then broken and/or crushed using e.g. a chopper or vacuum crusher. There are the possibilities of a "hot break" or a "cold break" as set out above. 15 The broken and/or crushed fruits may then be refined i. e. extracted or sieved to remove peels, seeds and possibly stems. However, it is also possible to carry out the refining step later in the process. Suitable equipment is e.g. 20 an extractor of the screw type or of the paddle type. The juice obtained is then optionally deaerated and/or salted. The pH of the fruit mass is then adjusted to 4.0 - 7.0, preferably to 5.5 - 6.5 by the careful addition of a basic substance usually food grade sodium hydroxide. The exact pH 25 value selected is usually determined by the optimal pH value for the growth of the particular Lactobacillus or Lactococcus strain to be employed. When it is intended to use e.g. Lactobacillus sake 0-1 (CBS 532.92) of which the optimal pH value is known to be 5.8 an initial pH value 30 somewhat above 5.8 is selected so that the Lactobacillus grows well during the fermentation period. For other suitable Lactobacilli and/or Lactococci different values will generally apply.

Dependent on the nature of the Lactobacilli and/or Lactococci actual fermenting may take place under different 35

conditions. Again in the case of Lactobacillus sake 0-1 (CBS 532.92) fermenting takes preferably place at a temperature between 15 and 35°C and under conditions without forced supply of oxygen for a period of 5 - 30 hours.

5 Generally the ranges of the fermentation temperature is somewhat wider viz. from 10 - 35°C anaerobic conditions may not be required. Fruits employed in the practice of this invention generally have a dry matter content below 10% (tomatoes 5-7.5%) of which about half consists of reducing 10 sugars mostly D-fructose and/or D-glucose. Lactobacilli and Lactococci convert these sugars when growing into lactic acid and polysaccharide. The percentage of soluble solids is conveniently expressed according to the Brix scale (i.e. calculated as sugar) and refractometers therefore often have in addition to the refractive scale a Brix 15 scale.

After fermenting the Lactobacilli and/or Lactococci are inactivated usually by heat treatment i.e. by pasteurisation and/or sterilisation. Thereafter the fermented 20 product may be deaerated and packed. Quite often packing takes place before pasteurisation/sterilisation. When aiming to produce a fruit paste as e.g. tomato paste concentration of the fermented liquid e.g. to a strength of around 7.5. Brix is desirable. Concentration is conveniently effected in tanks with heating coils or in vacuum 25 pans.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention such a process is provided in which the fruit is from a plant of the 30 family of the Solanaceae, preferably from Lycopersicum esculentum (=tomato), or any cultivar thereof. A particularly preferred group of tomato cultivars for the practice of this invention are the so-called "Pomodori" of Italy. For special effects it maybe desirable to use mixtures of 35 e.g. tomatoes and paprika, or tomatoes and vegetables or

their juices, preferably at least 50 wt% of tomatoes, more preferably at least 80 wt% of tomatoes are used.

5 In another preferred embodiment of the invention the *Lac-*  
*tobacillus* or *Lactococcus* strain producing when growing an  
extracellular polysaccharide is selected from the group  
*Lactobacillus sake* 0-1 (CBS 532.92), *Lactobacillus paraca-*  
*sei* (LMG 9193t1 and Lab 971) and *Lactococcus lactis cremoris*  
(LAB 338). LMG and LAB are abbreviations which indicate  
10 that the strains have been deposited at collections kept at  
Ghent University, Belgium. The use of mutants including  
those obtained by DNA-recombinant technology or classical  
mutagenolysis derived from the above *Lacobacilli* and *Lac-*  
*tococci* which are functionally equivalents of those iden-  
15 tified above as to EPS and lactic acid formation is also  
covered by the present invention. The above identified  
microorganisms form during growth not only lactic acid, but  
also polysaccharides which thicken the fruit mass. As far  
as e.g. *Lactobacillus sake* 0-1 (CBS 532.92) is concerned  
20 reference is made to *Appl. and Environm. Microbiol.*, 6  
(August 1995), pp. 2840-2844 in which inter alia the exo-  
polysaccharide formed by *Lactobacillus sake* 0-1 which  
comprises glucose and rhamnose units is more fully identi-  
fied. The use of a *Lactobacillus* or *Lactococcus* strain  
25 producing an extracellular polysaccharide containing rham-  
nose units is preferred inter alia because this may lead to  
particularly favourable flavour effect in the processed end  
product.

30 In a further preferred embodiment of the invention deae-  
ration of the broken and/or crushed fruit is effected prior  
to pasteurisation and/or sterilisation.

In a further preferred embodiment of the invention sieving  
35 is effected prior to pasteurisation and/or sterilisation.

In a further preferred embodiment of the invention fermentation is carried out at a temperature between 10 and 50°, preferably 20 and 40°C in the absence of supplied oxygen or air.

5

In a further preferred embodiment of the invention prior to fermentation with the *Lactobacillus* or *Lactococcus* strain a saccharide, preferably sucrose is added to the broken and/or crushed fruit material. More preferably the 10 amount of sucrose in the broken/crushed fruit material is adjusted to a level of 15-25 g/kg fruit material. Especially when using *Lactobacillus paracasei* (LMG 9193<sup>t1</sup>) the addition of sucrose is beneficial.

15 In a further embodiment of the invention the process from step ii) onwards is preferably carried out under aseptic conditions. Under these circumstances sterilisation to obtain the end product may be superfluous.

20 In a still further embodiment of the invention an enzymatic treatment of the fruit product is inserted between steps iv and v of the process, preferably using oxidoreductases such as peroxidases and/or glucose-oxidases.

25 Furthermore, the invention provides a fermented food product obtainable by a process as described above. These products compare favourably with those known sofar as to the properties mentioned above. More in particular they are improved as to serum separation, and thickness, and sometimes also as to colour and taste etc. Moreover their content of labelled food additives as e.g. thickening agents and citric acid can be minimised or their use even completely avoided.

The invention is further illustrated by the following examples. All parts and percentages in this specification and claims are taken on a weight basis unless otherwise indicated.

5

Example 1.

About 2 kg of fresh tomatoes (bought in a local supermarket) were stripped from stalks and washed with tap water. Subsequently the tomatoes were crushed for 3 min (at position 2-5) using a type Kenwood major (Kenwood Ltd, UK) electronic kneader / mixer. After crushing the seeds and skins were removed by centrifugation and sieving using a type Braun (Braun, Germany) household centrifuge and a laboratory test sieve type ASTM 11, 30 mesh (Endecots Ltd, UK) respectively, resulting in a tomato juice (suspension) having a dry matter content of 4.8%, a pH value of 3.93 and a Brix value of 4.5. After adjusting the pH value to 6.3 with food grade sodium hydroxide the juice was pasteurised (2 min - 100°C), cooled to 28°C and inoculated with Lactobacillus sake 0-1 (CBS 532.92) and to a starting cell concentration of  $2 \times 10^6$  cells per gram of juice (determined as colony forming units). Subsequently the inoculated tomato juice was fermented and processed as described below in more detail in example 5.

Table 1. Effect of fermentation on viscosity and sensoric properties of tomato juice.

Sample	run time / (s)	Sensoric properties
Unfermented juice	4	n.d.
Fermented juice	6	excellent

### Rheological measurements (run time):

To demonstrate the effect of fermentation on the rheological properties of tomato paste a fermented sample was compared with an unfermented sample in a standardised viscosity test using a type EZ™, equivalent "Zahn" viscosity cup (Gardco, USA), and which is said to exceed ASTM D4212, which cup has a diam. 5 mm orifice.

Example 2.

The same procedure as in Example 1 was used, however, after 10 centrifugation the tomato paste was heated for 2 minutes at 98 - 100°C and concentrated to a Brix value of 7.0 using a type Buchi R-124 Rotavapor vacuum evaporator operating at 65°C and a pressure of 15 - 20 kPa.

15 Table 2. Effect of fermentation on serum development in tomato paste at  $\times 540$  g force (dm = 7.8 %).

Sample / centr. time	0 minutes	3 minutes	6 minutes	9 minutes
Unfermented	< 1	31	35	34
Fermented	< 1	3	8	11

Rheology according to method as described in example 1.

The organoleptic properties of the fermented product were excellent.

25 Example 3.

About 2 kg of fresh tomatoes (type Italian Pomodori, bought at a local wholesaler) were stripped from stalks and washed with tap water. Subsequently the tomatoes were crushed for 3 minutes (at position 2-5) using a Kenwood major (Kenwood 30 Ltd, UK) electronic kneader/mixer. After crushing the seeds and skins were removed by centrifugation and sieving using a Braun (ex Braun, Germany) household centrifuge, resulting in a tomato paste having a pH value of 4.29 and a Brix value of 5.0. After adjusting the pH value to 6.3 with food

grade sodium hydroxide the paste was heated for 2 minutes at 98 - 100°C and concentrated to a Brix value of 7.0 using a type Buchi R-124 Rotavapor vacuum evaporator operating at 75°C and a pressure of 15 - 20kPa. Subsequently the tomato

5 paste was pasteurised (2 min - 100°C) cooled to 28°C and inoculated with Lactobacillus sake 0-1 (CBS 532.92) and a starting cell concentration of  $2 \times 10^6$  cells per gram of paste (determined as colony forming units). Thereafter the inoculated tomato paste was fermented for 24 hours at 28°C.

10 After fermentation the tomato paste was pasteurised for 30 minutes at 80°C, cooled to room temperature and used for organoleptic - and rheological analysis as described in Example 5. The product according to the invention proved to have very good organoleptic properties.

15

Table 3. Effect of fermentation on serum development in tomato paste at  $\times 540$  g force (Brix value 7.1)

Sample / centr. time	0 minutes	3 minutes	6 minutes	9 minutes
Unfermented	< 1	37	39	40
Fermented	< 1	< 1	< 1	< 1

Rheology according to the method described in Example 1.

25 Example 4.

About 2 kg of fresh tomatoes (type Italian Pomodori, bought at a local wholesaler) were manually stripped from stalks and skins (after 1 minute immersion in boiling water) and washed with tap water. Subsequently the tomatoes were cut

30 into 4 pieces and heated in a microwave oven (type Amano, 750W) for 10 minutes till the temperature reached 90°C. After heating the tomato pieces were processed into a paste using a Hobart N 50 (ex Hobart, Holland) kneader/mixer and sieved through a diam. 0.9-1.1 mm orifice using a type

Hobart 200S (ex Hobart, Holland) pilot sieving unit. After adjusting the pH value to 6.3 the tomato paste was further processed and fermented as described in the previous example (Ex. 3).

5

Table 4. Effect of fermentation on serum development in tomato paste at  $\times 540$  g force (Brix value 7.0)

10	Sample / centr. time	0 minutes	3 minutes	6 minutes	9 minutes
	Unfermented	< 1	38	38	40
	Fermented	< 1	< 3	< 8	< 9

Rheology according to the method described in Example 1.

15 Example 5.

Commercially available tomato paste (type Pummaro, ex STAR, Milan, Italy). Thus 100 g of Pummaro product was aseptically transferred into a sterile 300 ml size glass bottle and inoculated with 0.5% of a washed cell suspension of the

20 lactic acid bacterium type Lactobacillus sake 0-1 (CBS 532.92) and to a starting cell concentration of  $2 \times 10^6$  cells per gram (determined as colony forming units).

Before inoculation the pH of the tomato matrix was adjusted to a value of  $6.4 \pm 0.1$  by mixing in approx. 0.5% food

25 grade NaOH (10.8 mol/l).

Subsequently the inoculated tomato paste was fermented for 24 hours at  $28^\circ\text{C}$  during which time samples were taken for carrying out analysis. After the fermentation was completed the matrix was pasteurised for 30 minutes at  $80^\circ\text{C}$  and

30 cooled to room temperature.

#### Rheological measurements:

To demonstrate the effect of fermentation on the rheological properties of tomato paste a fermented sample was

compared with an unfermented sample in a standardised centrifugation test using serum layer development as an indicator. Thus 10 g of (un)fermented tomato paste was transferred each into a 16 x 100 mm culture tube and centrifuged for 0, 3 and 6 minutes at 540 g using a type 5 Hettig 30F Universal centrifuge. After centrifugation the height of the serum layer was measured in mm:

Table 5. Effect of fermentation (as also indicated by 10 viable cell count) on serum development in tomato paste at x 540 g force (dm = 8.59%).

Sample / centr. time	0 min	3 min	6 min	9 min	Viable count <sup>1)</sup>
Unfermented	< 1	18	22	26	< 10
Fermented	< 1	< 1	2	1	8 x 10 <sup>8</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> viable count in cfu/g before pasteurisation.

20 Example 6

Same as example 5 above except that during fermentation samples have been analysed for serum development, pH and viable counts.

Table 6. Effect of fermentation time on tomato paste.

Fermentation time [hours]	Serum height [mm]	Viable count [cfu/g]	pH
0	35	$2.0 \times 10^6$	6.5
4	33	$4.0 \times 10^6$	6.5
8	25	$1.4 \times 10^8$	6.1
11	2	$1.9 \times 10^8$	5.4
10	24	$6.8 \times 10^8$	4.3

Example 7.

The same procedure as described in example 6 was followed, however, now using Lactococcus lactis cremoris LAB 338.

15 Result: serum layer in 10 g fermented product after 9 minutes at 540 g (for procedure see Examples 1 and 5) within range of 2 - 4 mm. Control sample (unfermented) same as in example 1.

Claims

1. A process for preparing a fruit product comprising the steps of:
  - i) breaking and/or crushing the fruit,
  - ii) adjusting the pH to 4.0 - 7.0, preferably to 5.5 - 6.5,
  - iii) sterilising and/or pasteurising the broken/crushed fruit,
  - iv) adding a culture of a *Lactobacillus* or *Lactococcus*-strain producing when growing an extracellular polysaccharide at a rate of at least 0.8 g/l at 20°C, a pH of 5.8 within 24 hours an a medium according to De Man, Rogosa and Sharpe ( *J. Appl. Bacteriol.* 23: 130-135 (1960) followed by fermenting, and
  - v) pasteurising and/or sterilising the fermented fruit material.
2. Process according to claim 1, in which the fruit is from a plant of the family of the Solanaceae, preferably from *Lycopersicum esculentum* (=tomato), or any cultivar thereof.
3. Process according to claim 1 or 2, in which the *Lactobacillus*/*Lactococcus* is selected from the group comprising *Lactobacillus sake* 0-1 (CBS 532,92), *Lactobacillus paracasei* (LMG 9193t1 and LAB 97) and *Lactococcus lactis* *cremoris* (LAB 338) or a functional mutant thereof.
4. Process according to any of the claims 1-3, in which prior to pasteurisation/sterilisation deaeration of the broken and/or crushed fruit is effected.

5. Process according to any of the claims 1-5, in which prior to sterilisation sieving is effected.
6. Process according to any of the claims 1-5, in which fermentation is carried out at a temperature between 10 and 50°, preferably 20 and 40°C in the absence of supplied oxygen.
7. Process according to any of the claims 1-6, in which before adding the Lactobacillus or Lactococcus strain a saccharide, preferably sucrose is added to the broken and/or crushed fruit material.
8. Process according to any of the claims 1-7, in which the amount of sucrose in the broken/crushed fruit material is adjusted to a level of 15-25 g/kg fruit material.
9. Process according to any of the claims 1-8, in which the process from step ii) onwards is carried out under aseptic conditions.
10. A fermented food product obtainable by a process according to any of the preceding claims.

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No  
PCT/EP 97/02947

**A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER**  
IPC 6 A23L2/02 A23L2/84 A23L1/212 A23L1/06

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

**B. FIELDS SEARCHED**

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)  
IPC 6 A23L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

**C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	EP 0 308 064 A (KAGOME) 22 March 1989 cited in the application see claims; examples ---	1-10
A	DATABASE WPI Section Ch, Week 8240 Derwent Publications Ltd., London, GB; Class D13, AN 82-84396E XP002012722 & JP 57 138 370 A (KIRIN BREWERY KK) , 26 August 1982 see abstract ---	1-10
A	PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 013, no. 278 (C-611), 26 June 1989 & JP 01 074971 A (KAGOME KK), 20 March 1989, see abstract ---	1-10
	-/-	

Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

Patent family members are listed in annex.

\* Special categories of cited documents :

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Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report
10 September 1997	01.10.97
Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+ 31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax (+ 31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer Van Moer, A

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No  
PCT/EP 97/02947

**C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT**

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	<p style="margin-left: 20px;">PATENT ABSTRACTS OF JAPAN vol. 013, no. 278 (C-611), 26 June 1989 &amp; JP 01 074972 A (KAGOME KK), 20 March 1989, see abstract</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p>	1-10
2		

# INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No  
PCT/EP 97/02947

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